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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CA-01	CEA-01
	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	C-00	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	EXME-00	E-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	LAB-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OES-01
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00
	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	R-00	EPAE-00	ECA-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6423
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ABLAGG//

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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [VM](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [DPRK](#)

SUBJECT: GVN PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

REF: A. 01 HANOI 2967 B. HANOI 932

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. PRESIDENT TRAN DUC LUONG'S VISIT TO NORTH KOREA (DPRK) PROVIDED ANOTHER AT LEAST COSMETIC INDICATOR OF THE CONTINUING THAW IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. WHILE THE TWO COUNTRIES SIGNED A NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS, MOST APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE PRACTICAL APPLICATION. THE PROBABILITY OF ANY MAJOR GVN MEDIATION ROLE BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS APPEARS LOW. THE SUBJECT OF NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS ARRIVING IN VIETNAM VIA CHINA REPORTEDLY WAS NOT RAISED WITH PRESIDENT LUONG. CONDITIONS AROUND PYONGYANG APPEARED TO SOME IN THE DELEGATION AS marginally BETTER THAN TWO YEARS AGO. END SUMMARY.

SEVERAL AGREEMENTS, BUT WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

2. (U) VIETNAM'S PRESIDENT TRAN DUC LUONG VISITED THE DPRK MAY 2-5, WHERE HE MET WITH NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSION CHAIRMAN KIM JONG-IL AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY PRESIDUM KIM YONG-NAM. GVN FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DY NIEN, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CANH DINH, AND JUSTICE MINISTER NGUYEN DINH LOC TOOK PART IN THE DELEGATION, ALONG WITH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT LE HUY NGO, CONSTRUCTION MINISTER NGUYEN MANH KIEM, AND TRANSPORT MINISTER LE NGOC HOAN. SENIOR DPRK COUNTERPARTS INCLUDED FOREIGN MINISTER PAEK NAM-SUN AND TRADE MINISTER YI KWANG-KUN.

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3. (U) LUONG'S VISIT FOLLOWED THE OCTOBER 15-19, 2001 GVN/DPRK JOINT ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING IN PYONGYANG (REF A), THE FIRST SINCE VIETNAM OPENED BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA IN 1992, AS WELL AS A SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL VISITS IN 2000 AND 2001. THE INCREASED CONTACTS ARE IN LINE WITH VIETNAM'S GENERAL POLICY OVER THE PAST DECADE TO "BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE."

4. (U) THE TWO SIDES SIGNED A NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS DURING THE VIST, INCLUDING:

--A TREATY ON LEGAL COOPERATION IN CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES;

--AN AGREEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF DOUBLE TAXATION AND INCOME TAX EVASION;

--AN AGREEMENT ON MARITIME TRANSPORTATION; AND,

--AN AGREEMENT FOR IMPROVING BILATERAL TRADE, INCLUDING BARTER TRADE.

15. (SBU) LE VAN CU, MFA DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE ASIA I DEPARTMENT (WHO ACCOMPANIED PRESIDENT LUONG TO THE DPRK), TOLD POLOFF ON MAY 10 THAT THE AGREEMENTS SIGNED DURING THE "LANDMARK" VISIT REFLECTED THE "STRONG AND TRADITIONAL" BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. CU ADMITTED THAT THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS MIGHT NOT HAVE "MUCH VALUE NOW, BUT WILL SERVE AS A PATH TO FUTURE COOPERATION." WHEN PRESSED, CU WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC BILATERAL TRADE FIGURES, BUT ADMITTED

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TWO-WAY TRADE IS "NEGLIGIBLE." CU NOTED THAT VIETNAM HAD ALSO DONATED 5,000 TONS OF RICE TO NORTH KOREA, A "SMALL, SYMBOLIC" AMOUNT EQUIVALENT TO WHAT VIETNAM HAD DONATED LAST YEAR. CU SAID VIETNAM WOULD LIKE TO DONATE MORE, BUT "WE ARE ALSO A POOR COUNTRY." HE ADMITTED THE DPRK STILL OWES USD 10 MILLION TO VIETNAM FOR A 1996 RICE "SALE." CU SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN THE DPRK WOULD REPAY THIS DEBT, DUE TO ITS "DESTITUTE" ECONOMIC SITUATION. HOWEVER, CU CLAIMED THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE "UNDERSTOOD THE HARD SITUATION IN THE DPRK" AND ARE "FULLY SYMPATHETIC."

16. (SBU) ACCORDING TO ONE ROK EMBOFF, THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS ARE "QUITE MEANINGLESS," SINCE THE DPRK HAS "NOTHING TO OFFER VIETNAM." THE EMBOFF ALSO SAID THE IDEA OF "BARTER TRADE" IS "UNREALISTIC" FOR THE SAME REASON. HE DISCOUNTED REPORTS OF SOME CEMENT AND/OR COAL COMING INTO VIETNAM FROM THE DPRK. HE STRESSED THAT LUONG'S VISIT, OR THE THAWING TREND IN GVN/DPRK RELATIONS IN GENERAL, WOULD NOT HAVE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACT ON VIETNAM'S "STRONG" RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTH KOREA.

SUBSTANTIVE GVN MEDIATION ROLE UNLIKELY

17. (SBU) AS NOTED IN REF B, THE GVN HAD INDICATED NEW WILLINGNESS TO ACT AS A NORTH-SOUTH MEDIATOR DURING THE ROK

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CA-01	CEA-01
	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	C-00	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	EXME-00	E-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	LAB-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OES-01
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00
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	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/016W	

-----AD7BCB 130743Z /38

R 130733Z MAY 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
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INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
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AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/ABLAGG//

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PRESIDENT'S RECENT VISIT; PRESS REPORTS HAD ALSO SPECULATED ON SUCH A POTENTIAL ROLE FOR VIETNAM. THE ROK EMBOFF AND CU SEPARATELY DOWNPLAYED THIS LIKELIHOOD, HOWEVER. ACCORDING TO THE EMBOFF, VIETNAM, AS A SOCIALIST COUNTRY, IS "PROBABLY NOT SUITABLE" TO BECOME SERIOUSLY INVOLVED IN SUCH AN EFFORT, OTHER THAN TO "PASS MESSAGES" BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. THE MFA'S CU SAID THAT HE VIEWED AN ACTIVE MEDIATION ROLE AS "IMPROBABLE." HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT LUONG HAD INDEED PASSED A MESSAGE TO HIS HOSTS FROM SOUTH KOREA'S LEADERSHIP CONCERNING THE ROK'S DESIRE FOR "PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS" ON THE ISSUE OF KOREAN REUNIFICATION, A GOAL THAT VIETNAM "FULLY SUPPORTS," CU EMPHASIZED.

CONCERN OVER DEFECTORS?

18. (SBU) PRESS REPORTS HAVE SUGGESTED THE LEGAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT MAY HAVE BEEN A REACTION TO AN

INCREASING NUMBER OF DPRK DEFECTORS COMING THROUGH THE PRC ATTEMPTING TO USE VIETNAM AS A TRANSIT POINT TO SOUTH KOREA. THE ROK EMBOFF ACKNOWLEDGED THIS INCREASE IS "PROBABLY A CONCERN TO THE DPRK," ALTHOUGH HE WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC NUMBERS. THE MFA'S CU CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT THE ISSUE OF POTENTIAL NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS ENTERING VIETNAM DID NOT COME UP DURING LUONG'S VISIT AND THAT THE GVN DID NOT CONSIDER THIS ISSUE IMPORTANT.

UPCOMING VISITS

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19. (U) THE MFA'S CU SAID PRESIDENT LUONG HAD INVITED KIM JONG IL TO VISIT VIETNAM, WHILE KIM INVITED COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM GENERAL SECRETARY NONG DUC MANH TO VISIT THE DPRK. CU SAID THE RESPECTIVE INVITATIONS WERE ACCEPTED "HAPPILY," ALTHOUGH NO DATES HAVE BEEN DETERMINED FOR EITHER VISIT.

CONDITIONS marginally better?

110. (SBU) CU, WHO LIVED IN THE DPRK FOR 12 YEARS AND HAS MADE NUMEROUS TRIPS THERE THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, SAID CONDITIONS APPEARED "A LITTLE BETTER" SINCE 2001. THERE WERE A FEW MORE LIGHTS BURNING AT NIGHT, COMPARED TO A VISIT HE MADE IN 2000 WHEN THE STREETS WERE NEARLY DARK AFTER THE SUN SET. WHILE HE DID NOT HAVE MUCH TIME TO WALK AROUND, HE NOTICED A FEW VERY SMALL MARKETS, APPARENTLY NEW. BURGHARDT

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